


Advancing our agenda, plus social commerce, trucking regs and a leaf-ly celosia




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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Advancing Our Agenda
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Advancing Our Agenda

This *Washington Post* article made the rounds last week. The author's opinion is that, while we wait for the "all clear" to go about our former (or completely new) pandemic-less lives, gardening and the garden are the salve for all the past year has rendered. And it's the pleasant room in which we while away the time until we can venture afar and uninhibited.

Here's how she put it:

"...my garden feels like the bridge that will carry me through the pandemic's final weeks and months. If routine activities are slow to resume outside my fence, I can still foster an explosion of new life inside it."

Essentially the author is driving business our way this spring. Internally we horticultural folks have been betting we'd have another banner year. And here's at least a little proof we aren't the only ones tooting the gardening horn for 2021.



Are We Prepared?

Sue Adams of Mark Adams Greenhouses in upstate New York responded to my "How's spring so far?" query from last week. She is nowhere near the center of the spring thaw, I can guarantee, but spring is indeed springing.



That is, *inside* the greenhouses spring has definitely sprung.



Each year Adams Fairacre Farms (Poughkeepsie, Kingston, Wappingers Falls and Newburgh,

New York) transforms the seasonal greenhouse at each of its four stores into a gorgeous garden complete with water features and all! This year, Sue said, no vendors were allowed in but with social distancing measures in place and an extended time period, they had many visitors come through to enjoy the beautiful spring color.

Sue had a chance to talk with some of those eager-for-spring visitors. “Many folks are afraid that their garden centers will run out of product,” she reported. “We had DIY display gardens featuring vegetables, and visitors were anxious to buy plants then and there, despite frigid temperatures.” She said the garden center managers told her that sales for seeds and products to create raised beds were quite strong. (I don’t blame them! I’m placing an order for composted soil for this weekend.)

Sue closed her email with this comment: “I’m wondering if we’ll have a run on plants like there was on toilet paper last year.”

Buckle up, Buttercup. We’re in for a helluva spring. How is your spring going so far? Tell me about it at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

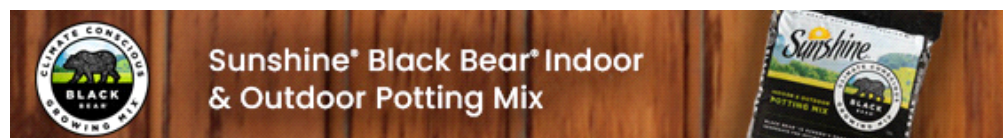


Podcast on Value Propositions

While great sales are almost a guarantee this spring, how can you get your fair share of them? Ball Publishing’s Senior and Digital Editor Bill Calkins’ latest Tech On Demand podcast is hitting the bullseye for a solution to that question: product differentiation as it relates to your value proposition.

In the latest Tech On Demand episode, which you can listen to [HERE](#), Bill and Bryce Anderson, sales manager for The HC Companies, spend some time on ways and reasons to differentiate. They begin by highlighting how critical it is for growers to move toward product uniqueness and away from falling into the commodity trap. Bryce shares his perspectives on how to navigate a marketplace of choices and find products that are truly different. He spends time on the costs required to create difference but even more time on the cost not to differentiate. They kick around the question if differentiation strategies should fall on the grower or retailer (or both).

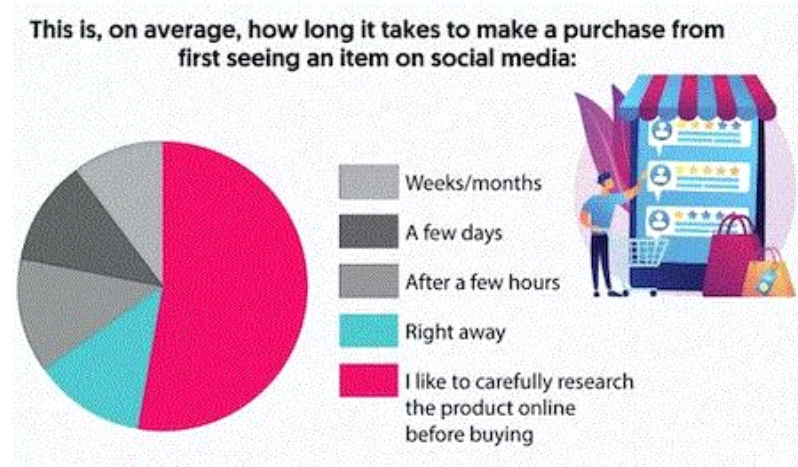
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Millennials and Gen Z and Social Commerce

Over the last year of the pandemic the world of digital commerce exploded. Faster than you had anticipated, I bet, but we got there as best we could. Something else that exploded—but maybe a little more under the radar—was social commerce. A recent infographic from [Social Media Today](#) not only explains what social commerce is (it’s selling directly from Instagram, for example, without having to leave the app), it has a wealth of information gleaned from a survey of 350 Millennials and Gen Zers about their social commerce habits.

It's long and packed with info and me trying to fit it all here is a Herculean task. But what I will do is provide you with this portion of the graphic:



Look at the big pink piece of the pie. Gen Z and Millennials do take time to consider purchases and don't go full-steam into buying through a social app. That's important to know in case you're thinking it's completely necessary to take your sales in that direction.

To back this up, here's this comment from a Gen Zer:



If she's any example of an average Gen Zer, these folks are making sensible decisions.



A Trucking Regs Reminder

Thanks, AmericanHort, for sending out a reminder about the changed trucking regulations as the busy shipping season begins to ramp up. If you didn't already receive it, it goes thusly:

"We received a report of a truck being pulled over in Maryland and cited with a safety violation for

transporting greenhouse plants as agricultural commodities under the ag exemption.

"Since the rules were just clarified in December to embrace nursery and floriculture, there could be more incidents like this in the near term. It often takes time for rule change guidance to make its way to employees on the enforcement front lines. You can protect yourself and your plant shipments by having your drivers or haulers carry a copy of the current regulations printed out and available for enforcement officials. You can find those regulations in the Federal Register [HERE](#)."

This Week's New Plant

I have another one from PanAmerican Seed that I got word of via National Garden Bureau's Inspiring Gardeners e-newsletter. It's a *Celosia argentea* collection named Sol and its moneymaking attribute isn't its flowers but its foliage.



Gekko Green and Lizzard Leaf make the perfect border and patio plants with bicolor leaves and burgundy-red undertones. Just look at the texture on those leaves. This sun-loving accent foliage plant can even be used as a shrub-like option for the front of the border. How fun.

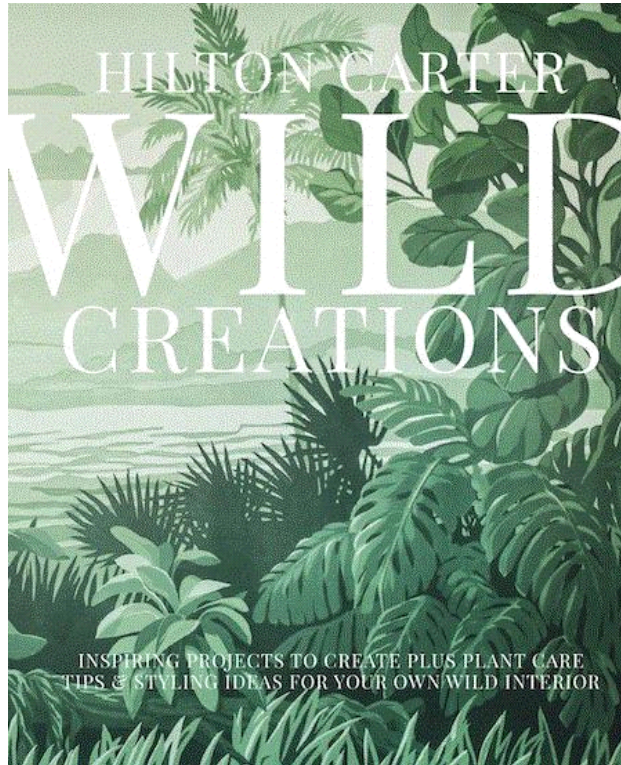
Also FYI, this goes to show you that people do indeed get inspired by gardening newsletters like NGB's. I was inspired enough to share it with you!

If you have a new variety you'd like to share, please tell me about it at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

Hilton's New Book

Hilton Carter is a bit of a celebrity when it comes to houseplants. The first I heard of him was in a *New York Times* article about the trendiness of houseplants. His tropically lush Baltimore abode—among others who were living the Houseplant Parent lifestyle—were taking the social media world by storm.

Fast forward and Hilton is now celebrating the April 6th release of his third book, “Wild Creations: Inspiring projects to create plus plant care tips and styling ideas for your own wild interior.”



In his previous books (“Wild at Home” and “Wild Interiors”) he gave readers glimpses into beautifully designed, plant-filled homes. In “Wild Creations,” Hilton shows how you can create these over-the-top (or just plain simple) houseplant fantasy-scapes yourself.

The book is laid out in a number of sections: a step-by-step DIY section, a tips-and-tricks section, a Hilton’s-favorite-indoor-plants section and a chapter on the transformative power of plants.

“Wild Creations” is published by CICO Books. Order some to have on hand in your houseplant department as folks start coming in for spring!

Speaking of Lush Designs

Folks, I am working on an article about the best tropical plants for outdoor combo containers. I know there are a bunch of “thrillers,” but how about fillers and spillers? Please share with me your favorite combos for a stunning season-long tropical container display. Ideas? Drop me a line about them at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

Questions, comments, suggestions? Drop me a line if you'd like at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



Ellen Wells
Editor-at-Large
Green Profit

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